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## On Top of the World— A Visit to the Aloft Conn

August 24, 2010

Date: August 24, 2010  
 Time: 1748 hours Pacific Daylight Time  
 Latitude: 81°21.25'N  
 Longitude: 135°01.38'W  
 Air temperature: 3°C (37°F)  
 Sea temperature: -1.4°C (29.5°F)  
 Wind speed and direction: [not available]  
 Ship's speed over the ground: 6.3 knots  
 Water depth: 3,664 m

This afternoon I visited the Aloft Conn, a control room high above the bridge that is used for driving the ship during icebreaking. The height of the Aloft Conn, which is on the 08 deck, gives the officers a good view of the ice ahead.



It's a steep climb from the bridge to the Aloft Conn, up three vertical ladders (one for each deck). Here's a view looking up the topmost ladder and through the hatch in the floor of the Aloft Conn. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



*Healy's* decks are numbered from the Main Deck, which is about 15 ft above the waterline and includes the mess, the Main Lab, and the fantail (from which we deploy corers and other instruments). Decks below the Main Deck are numbered 1, 2, and so on; decks above the Main Deck are numbered 01, 02, and so on. **Credit:** University of New Hampshire/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** USGS/ECS Project.

To see the ice ahead of *Healy*, Officer of the Deck ENS Charles Sinks and Break-in Officer of the Deck ENS Holly McNair were relying not just on the height of the Aloft Conn but also on a radar system, which proved particularly useful on this foggy afternoon. Green blips on the radar screen are returns from features on the ice. Lines of green blips commonly signify pressure ridges, which are created when floes collide and can be difficult to break through. Dark areas on the radar screen could be either open water or flat ice floes with smooth surfaces; it takes experience to tell the difference.

Even with the information provided by the radar and the view from the Aloft Conn's windows, finding a way through the ice without deviating too far from the planned trackline is an art. This afternoon the icebreaking



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[Sep 05 Log](#)



[Aug 29 Log](#)



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[Aug 24 Log](#)



[Aug 23 Log](#)



[Aug 22b Log](#)



ENS Sinks points to a dark area on the radar screen that could be either open water or a smooth ice floe just ahead of the ship. Note also the lines of blips that are likely pressure ridges. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.

was going well and a feeling of calm concentration pervaded the Aloft Conn, making it a pleasant place to linger. A fogbow appeared as the fog grew thinner, and interesting features—such as a set of polar bear tracks—glided past our view.



The dark area on the radar screen was an ice floe with a flat, smooth surface. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



ENS Sinks checks a monitor as he drives *Healy* through the ice. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



ENS McNair between radio communications. In the lower left is a grate she placed over the hole in the deck used to enter the Aloft Conn. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



Canadian Liaison Captain Michel Bourdeau (Canadian Coast Guard) compares the view out the window with information on the radar screen. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



A fogbow appears as the fog thins. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project.



Polar bear tracks on an ice floe.



[Aug 22a Log](#)



[Aug 21 Log](#)



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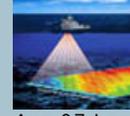
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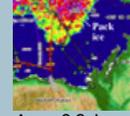
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[Aug 06 Log](#)



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[Aug 03 Log](#)



[Photo Log](#)

Click image for larger view.

**Credit:** Helen Gibbons,  
USGS/ECS Project.

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Helen enjoys the views and the company in the Aloft Conn. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** ENS Holly McNair, U.S. Coast Guard.

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